

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this Application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

This Amendment is in response to the final Office Action mailed on December 1, 2005. Claims 1-8 and 17-24 are pending in the Application and stand allowed. The indication of allowed subject matter is noted with appreciation. Claims 9-16 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer by the present Amendment.

Summarizing the outstanding Office Action, Claims 9-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Aoyama et al. (U.S. Patent 5,848,329). Applicants respectfully submit that the cancellation of Claims 9-16 now makes this rejection moot.

The present amendment is submitted in accordance with the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.116, which after a Final Rejection permits entry of amendments placing the claims in condition for allowance.¹ As the present amendment simply cancels claims that have not been allowed, the present amendment places the application in condition for allowance. It is therefore respectfully requested that 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be liberally construed, and that the present amendment be entered.

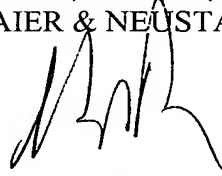
Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-8 and 17-24 is earnestly solicited.

¹ See, for example, MPEP §714.12.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representatives at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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